

*It was the Indians' way  
to pass through a country  
without disturbing anything;  
to pass and leave no trace,  
like a fish through the water  
or birds through the air.*

— Willa Cather



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The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

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Governor

MARY D. NICHOLS  
Secretary for Resources

RUTH COLEMAN  
Acting Director, California State Parks



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**Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park**  
**Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum**  
**14881 Pine Grove-Volcano Road**  
**Pine Grove, CA 95665**  
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# Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

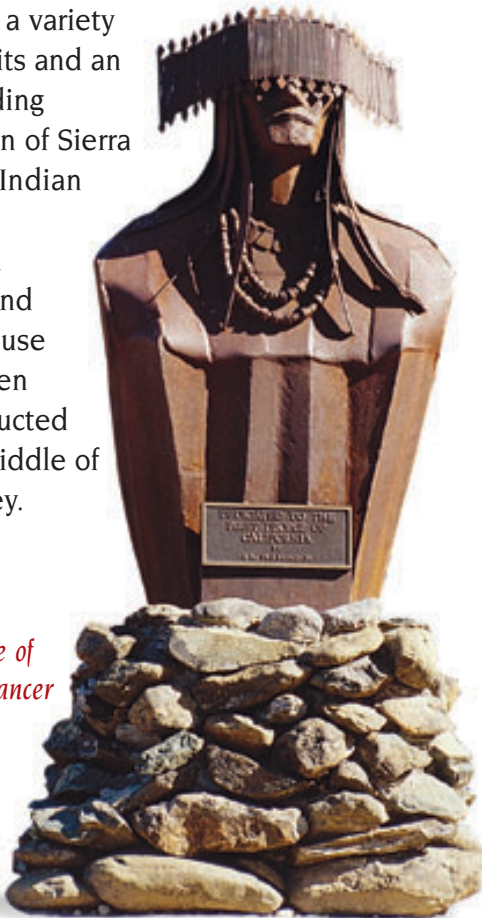




## Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills, eight miles east of Jackson. The park is nestled in a little valley 2,400 feet above sea level with open meadows and large valley oaks that once provided Native Americans with an ample supply of acorns. The 135-acre park preserves a great outcropping of marbleized limestone with 1,185 mortar holes—the largest collection of bedrock mortars anywhere in North America. Trails make it easy to explore the meadows and surrounding forest. The Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum features a variety of exhibits and an outstanding collection of Sierra Nevada Indian artifacts. A Miwok village and roundhouse have been reconstructed in the middle of the valley.

*Sculpture of  
Miwok dancer*



## THE GRINDING ROCK AND PETROGLYPHS

*Chaw'se* is the Miwok word for a grinding rock—a slab of stone on which the Miwok people pounded acorns and other seed into meal, slowly forming the cup-shaped depressions in the stone that can still be seen today. The main grinding rock also features a number of decorative carvings—including circles, spoked wheels, animal and human tracks, and wavy lines. Some of these carvings are thought to be as much as two or even three thousand years old and are now becoming difficult to see. This association of rock art and bedrock mortar pits is unique in California. Except for one other small site, Chaw'se has the only known occurrence of mortars intentionally decorated with petroglyphs.

The marble grinding rock is fragile and very susceptible to weathering and chipping. The natural elements are claiming many of the petroglyphs, and visitors are asked to stay off the rock and to respect this irreplaceable reminder of a vanished way of life.

## HISTORY

### The Miwok

The Northern Sierra Miwok, who settled in this area many centuries ago, established their villages alongside the rivers and streams of the Sierra Nevada—from the Cosumnes River on the north to the Calaveras River on the south. Other Northern Sierra Miwok groups lived to the west as far as Mount Diablo and as far south as Yosemite National Park.



*Museum exhibit*

The Miwok possessed a detailed understanding of the resources available to them, and they passed this knowledge down from generation to generation. Deer were the most important animal resource, and all parts were utilized. The meat was used for food, and clothing was made from the hide. Antlers, bones and hooves were used for tools and instruments, and the brain was used to tan the hide.

Plant foods were generally collected and processed by women, while men trapped, fished and hunted. All resources were used with care and thanksgiving so they would continue to be available, and little or nothing was wasted. For example, a plant called soap root was mashed and used not only as soap, but also to stun and catch fish. Its leaves were eaten fresh, and the bulb could be baked and eaten. The dried, fibrous leaves were bundled and used as a brush.

Acorns, the mainstay of the Miwok diet, were harvested in autumn, dried and stored in large granaries (*cha'ka*) made of poles interwoven with slender brush stems. Resembling large baskets, the *cha'kas* were



Oak trees

thatched with short boughs of white fir or incense cedar to shed snow and rain and lined with pine needles and wormwood to repel insects and rodents.

The acorns were rich in nutrition, but because they contain a lot of tannin, they are bitter to the taste. To make them edible, the Miwok cracked and shelled them, and placed the acorn meat in

mortar holes (*chaw'se*) in the large flat limestone outcropping in the meadow to be pounded with a stone pestle to the texture of fine meal. Hot and cold water was poured through the meal to leach out the tannin. The prepared meal was mixed with water in a large, watertight cooking basket. Hot rocks were added to the acorn mush or soup and moved around with paddles until the acorn meal was cooked.

The Miwok also caught fish and hunted game throughout the hills. The climate was agreeable, the water supply reliable, and many good village sites were available.

Commodities that could not be found locally could often be obtained through trade with neighboring groups.

The village was the primary political unit in Miwok life, though alliances were likely to exist between villages, and some basic understandings were widely held by the Miwok as a whole. Village size varied from two dozen individuals to as many as several hundred. Each village had a specific territory that belonged to the group. Because this territory encompassed several ecological life zones, the village could be reasonably sure that its needs for food, clothing and shelter would be met. Diversity in the environment was important to survival.

### The Gold Rush

The annual cycle of native life that revolved around the little meadow was dramatically altered by James Marshall's discovery of gold at Coloma in January 1848. Miners poured into the area, forcing the Miwok out of their traditional patterns of residence and subsistence. Prospectors and both hydraulic and quartz mining operations eventually surrounded the area. Mine tailings can still be seen today in some of the park's ravines.

Though mining was the dominant economic activity in this area during the 1850s, agricultural enterprises were also attempted. Several farms and ranches were established in the area, with one of the first located in the meadow area of the present-day park. In June 1852

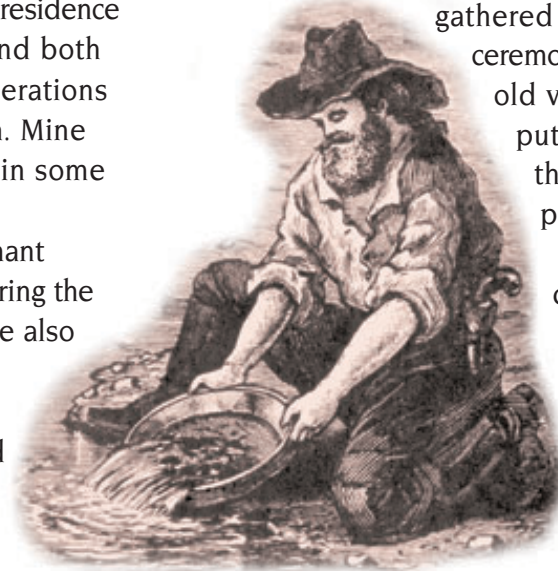
one miner wrote in his diary, "They are mowing their grass and barley on the flat and offered me \$3 a day to mow." The diarist declined this offer and hastened to nearby Volcano where a miner's wage was \$6 a day.

Reminders of early-day Amador County ranching and farming activity are throughout the park, including a farmhouse and outbuildings, a garden site, orchards, livestock pond sites and other traces of farm life. By 1868 the property belonged to the Else family, who grew barley and other grain crops, raised cattle and planted an orchard. The small stream that runs through the park is still known as Else Creek.

William Blakely acquired the property in the 1870s. In the late 1880s, he sold about 160 acres to Serafino Scapuccino. Scapuccino tended the orchard, raised cattle and developed a truck garden. He is said to have welcomed the Miwoks, who sometimes camped in the meadow,

gathered acorns and held ceremonial events at the old village site. He also put a fence around the "great rock" to protect it.

After Scapuccino's death his family continued to hold title to the property until the 1950s. At this time the surviving members,







*The Roundhouse*

James and Serafino, Jr., became concerned that development pressures would eventually destroy the scenic, historical and archeological value of the meadow and its unique bedrock mortars. A friend suggested that it might be possible to preserve the site as a state park, an idea that found immediate support in the nearby town of Volcano. A campaign to save the site was launched, and in 1958 the State of California acquired 48.5 acres of the Scapuccino property. The site was formally dedicated as a state park in 1968 and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

## **TODAY'S PARK**

### **The Village and Roundhouse**

Development in the park emphasizes the aboriginal importance of the site. A reconstructed Miwok village provides present day descendents of the Miwok with an opportunity to preserve their heritage and traditions and share them with future generations of Californians. Bark houses, a ceremonial roundhouse, acorn granaries,

shade ramadas, an Indian game field, and demonstrations of old arts, crafts and games all combine to illustrate the past. California State Parks has an ongoing commitment to cooperate with the local Native Americans in the development of the park.

In the past, the Roundhouse (*hun'ge*) was the setting for various social gatherings and

ceremonial events. Ceremonies were held to pray, to mourn the dead, or to observe special occasions through music and dance. In a typical village, this semi-subterranean community center was the largest building and tended to be between 20 and 50 feet in diameter. The Chaw'se *hun'ge* is 60 feet across—one of the largest in California. Four massive beams and center poles support the roof. A hole in the center of the roof allows smoke from the fire pit to escape and also permits some observation of the night sky.

Miwok homes ranged from eight to 15 feet in diameter and were built of cedar poles interwoven with grapevines or willow and covered with cedar bark. A hole was left at the top to vent smoke from cooking or heating fires. Bark houses (*u'macha*) can be seen near the grinding rock and also at the reconstructed village west of the Roundhouse.

A game field (*poscoi a we'a*) has also been reconstructed near the Roundhouse. The game played by the Miwok was very similar to soccer. On a field about 110 yards long, players tried to kick or carry a ball to the opposing team's goal. Both men and women played, though the rules were different for each. Men could only kick the ball, while women could handle the ball in any manner. However, if a woman held the ball, a man could pick her up and run for the goal.

### **Big Time**

Several times each year, ceremonies are held in the *hun'ge* by local Native Americans. In September, Indian families gather at the park for the annual acorn harvest thanksgiving ceremonies (Big Time). Dancing, hand games, singing and storytelling are traditional activities. Spectators are welcome, but there is no fixed schedule of events. Native American crafts and foods are available.



*Reconstructed Miwok village*

## Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum

The two-story Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum has been designed to reflect the architecture of the traditional roundhouse. Outstanding examples of the technology and crafts of the Miwok and other Sierra Nevada Native American groups are exhibited in the museum.



As part of a regional Indian museum, the collection at Chaw'se includes Northern, Central and Southern Miwok, Maidu, Konkow, Monache, Nisenan, Tubatulabal, Washo and Foothill Yokuts. Examples of basketry, feather regalia, jewelry, arrow points and other tools are on display. Hours at the museum are from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. The nonprofit Chaw'se Association operates a sales area where books, posters, postcards and educational items can be purchased. Lectures, videos and

demonstrations at the museum provide insights into Native American life in the Sierra region.

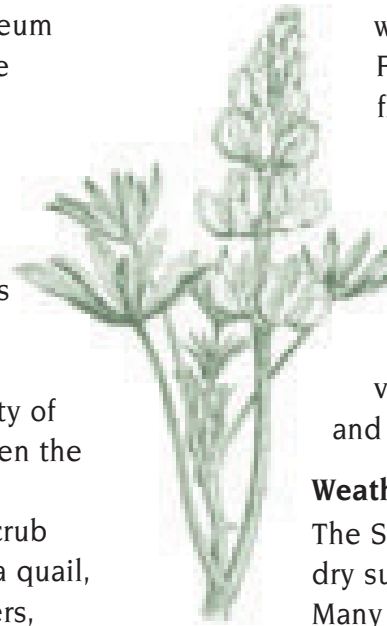
### Fauna

Though the park is small, it offers many opportunities to observe wildlife. Oak woodlands and mixed pine forest provide a wide variety of habitats, much as it did when the Miwok lived here. Bird life includes turkey vultures, scrub and Steller's jays, California quail, acorn and hairy woodpeckers, northern flickers, hermit thrushes and California thrashers. In summer the bright colors of western tanagers, northern orioles, calliopes and Anna's hummingbirds can be seen in the woods around the meadow. A bird list is available at the museum.

Animal life includes deer, foxes, gray and California ground squirrels, black-tailed jackrabbits, bobcats, and occasionally a mountain lion or black bear. The legendary coyote—the trickster of Miwok stories—can be heard singing on quiet summer nights.

### Flora

More than 130 species of native plants have been identified in the park, many of which were used by the Miwok. Spring brings an incredible variety of



*Yellow  
Lupine*

wildflowers to the Sierra foothills. Flowering plants include monkey flower, giant trillium, shooting star, several species of lupine, farewell-to-spring, harvest bordiaea, humboldt lily, western buttercup, mariposa lily, Hartwegs iris, showy phlox, wild rose, mountain violet, filaree, yellow star flower and baby blue eyes.

### Weather

The Sierra foothills experience warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. Many summer days exceed 90 degrees. Snow falls occasionally during the winter in the Chaw'se area.

## FACILITIES

### Trails

There are two developed trails in the park. The North Trail, a one-mile round trip, starts near the museum. It traverses the ridge surrounding the meadow, passes by the old farm site, crosses the creek, and continues to the reconstructed Miwok village site before returning to the museum by way of the Roundhouse and grinding rock. The half-mile South Trail is a self-guided nature trail and starts near the Roundhouse. The trail guide describes the ethnobotany of the area and identifies some of the plants that were used by the Miwok.



Campsite

### Picnicking

A picnic area with a shade ramada near the grinding rock can accommodate groups of up to 150. Reservations for the picnic area are not necessary. There is also a small picnic area next to the museum. Please do not use campsites for picnicking.

### Camping

The park has 23 campsites, each with paved parking (trailers/motor homes to twenty-seven feet), tables, food lockers, fire rings, piped water and restrooms with flush toilets and showers. Wood gathering is not allowed, but firewood may be purchased at the park. Campsites are available first-come, first-served. The park is open for camping all year, but is subject to closure during times of heavy snowfall.

### Environmental Living/Group Camping

Camping in the bark houses to the north (*U'macha'tam'ma'*) is a unique

opportunity to get away from it all and get back in touch with the natural world while learning something about Miwok life. Seven bark houses, each one suitable for up to six people, have been constructed in a secluded area of the park. They can be reserved for a group of up to 44 people. The camping is primitive; you must haul water, supplies and equipment two hundred yards or more from the parking area. But your time here will be unforgettable. Reservations can be made up to six months in advance by mail. (Reservations cannot be made by phone.) Contact the park for application forms and further information.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES &

Call for specific details.

- **Camping**—One family campsite and one restroom.
- **Picnicking**—Tables are generally easy to access.
- **Exhibits**—There is easy access to the restrooms, into the Indian Museum, around exhibits and to the view platform at the Grinding Rock. A video is also available.

We hope your visit to Chaw'se will be in this spirit, and you will grow in understanding and respect for the Native Americans of the Sierra Nevada.

*"It was the Indians' way to pass through a country without disturbing anything; to pass and leave no trace, like a fish through the water or birds through the air."*

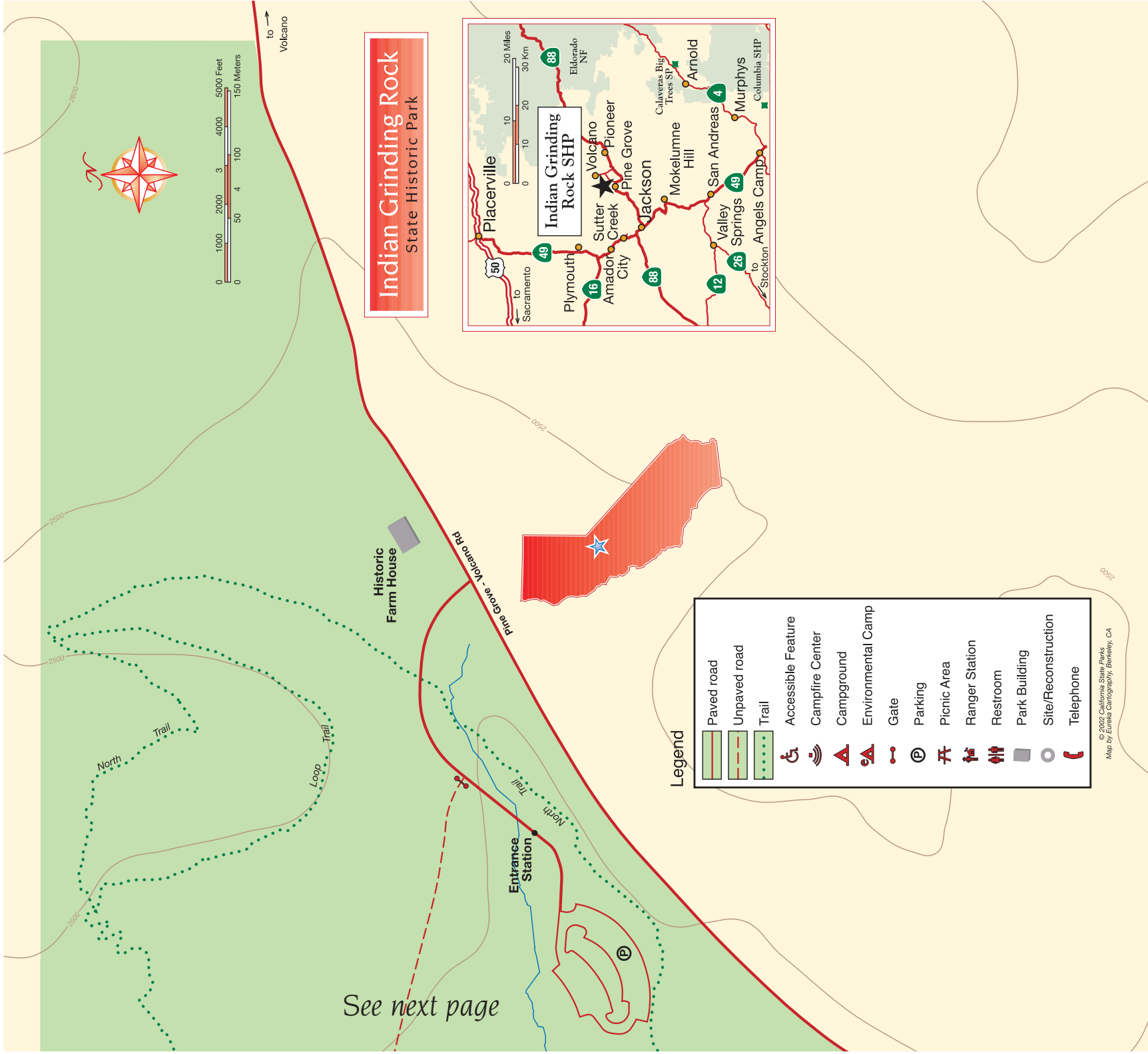
—Willa Cather

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Like the grinding rock itself, the meadow at Chaw'se is fragile. Stay on the trails and do not pick the wildflowers.
- State law prohibits gathering or removing artifacts. Leave objects you discover where you found them, and notify the park staff of their location.

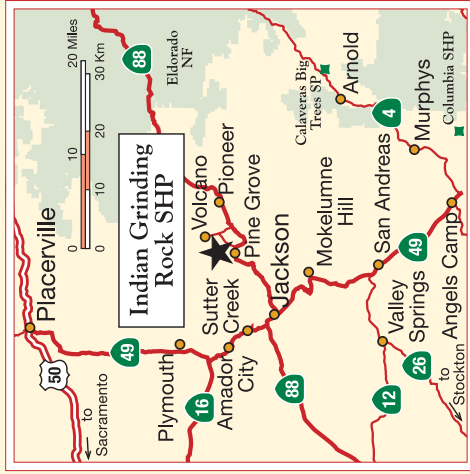
### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Calaveras Big Trees State Park, four miles northeast of Arnold on Highway 4 (209) 795-2334
- Columbia State Historic Park, three miles north of Sonora off Highway 49 (209) 532-0150/4301
- Railtown 1897 State Historic Park, in Jamestown off Highway 108 (209) 964-3953



See next page

# Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park



**Legend**

|  |              |  |                     |
|--|--------------|--|---------------------|
|  | Paved road   |  | Accessible Feature  |
|  | Unpaved road |  | Campfire Center     |
|  | Trail        |  | Campground          |
|  |              |  | Environmental Camp  |
|  |              |  | Gate                |
|  |              |  | Parking             |
|  |              |  | Picnic Area         |
|  |              |  | Ranger Station      |
|  |              |  | Restroom            |
|  |              |  | Park Building       |
|  |              |  | Site/Reconstruction |
|  |              |  | Telephone           |

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This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization.  
For more information contact: Chaw'se Indian Grinding Rock  
Association • P.O. Box 1458 • Pine Grove, CA 95665



North

U'macha'tam'ma'  
Environmental Living/  
Group Camp



North  
Trail

Parking for  
Environmental Living/  
Group Camp



North  
Trail

INDIAN GRINDING ROCK  
STATE HISTORIC PARK

Else Creek

Reconstructed  
Miwok Village



South Nature  
Trail

South Nature  
Trail

Chaw'se Regional  
Indian Museum



GRINDING  
ROCK  
AND  
PETROGLYPHS

Practice  
House



Ceremonial  
Roundhouse



Shade  
Ramada



Granary



Bark  
Houses



Special Event  
Food Stand



Hand Game  
House



Indian  
Game  
Field

Campsites  
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One-Way



Registration  
Booth

Residence



Maintenance  
Shop



to  
Pine Grove

See previous page